

Indoor residual spraying of experimental huts in Cameroon highlights the potential of Fludora® Fusion to control wild pyrethroid-resistant malaria vectors

Riccado F. Thiomela (✉ riccado.feudjio@crid-cam.net)

Centre for Research in Infectious Diseases (CRID), P.O. Box 13501, Yaoundé

Magellan Tchouakui

Centre for Research in Infectious Diseases (CRID), P.O. Box 13501, Yaoundé

Benjamin D. Menze

Centre for Research in Infectious Diseases (CRID), P.O. Box 13501, Yaoundé

Elysee Nchoutpouen

Centre for Research in Infectious Diseases (CRID), P.O. Box 13501, Yaoundé

Emilie S. Ngongang-Yipmo

Centre for Research in Infectious Diseases (CRID), P.O. Box 13501, Yaoundé

Oliver Wood

Envu 2022 ES Deutschland GmbH

Sebastian Horstmann

Envu 2022 ES Deutschland GmbH

Raymond J. Mahob

Department of Animal Biology and Physiology, Faculty of Science, P.O. Box 812, University of Yaoundé 1, Yaoundé

Abraham Fomena

Department of Animal Biology and Physiology, Faculty of Science, P.O. Box 812, University of Yaoundé 1, Yaoundé

Charles S. Wondji

Centre for Research in Infectious Diseases (CRID), P.O. Box 13501, Yaoundé

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Abstract

Elevated resistance to pyrethroids has led to the introduction of novel insecticides including neonicotinoids. However, the efficacy of these new control products could be impacted by cross-resistance mechanisms from metabolic resistance to pyrethroids. In this study, after evaluating the resistance to clothianidin and mixture of clothianidin+deltamethrin in the lab using CDC bottle assays, the efficacy of the new IRS formulation Fludora[®] Fusion IRS was tested in the experimental huts against wild free-flying pyrethroid-resistant *Anopheles funestus* in Elende and field *An. gambiae* from Nkolondom, Cameroon. Additionally, cone tests were performed on the wall of treated huts each month to evaluate the residual efficacy of the sprayed products. Furthermore, the L1014F-kdr target site mutation and the L119F-GSTe2 mediated metabolic resistance to pyrethroids were genotyped on a subset of mosquitoes from the EHT to assess the potential cross-resistance. All *Anopheles* species tested were fully susceptible to clothianidin and clothianidin+deltamethrin mixture in CDC bottle assay while resistance was noted to deltamethrin. Accordingly, Fludora[®] Fusion and clothianidin induced significantly higher mortality rates in EHT than deltamethrin with mortality rates of 62.83%, 64.42% and 42.42% against free flying *An. funestus* from Elende. However, lower mortality rates were recorded against *An. gambiae* from Nkolondom (mortality rates 50%, 45.56% and 26.68%). *In-situ* cone test on the wall showed a high residual efficacy of Fludora[®] Fusion and clothianidin on the susceptible strain KISUMU (>12 months) and moderately on the highly pyrethroid-resistant *An. gambiae* strain from Nkolondom (6 months). Interestingly, no association was observed between the L119F-GSTe2 mutation and the ability of mosquitoes to survive exposure to Fludora[®] Fusion, whereas a trend was observed with the L1014F-kdr mutation. This study highlights that Fludora[®] Fusion, has good potential of controlling pyrethroid-resistance mosquitoes with prolonged residual efficacy. This could be therefore an appropriate tool for vector control in several malaria endemic regions.

Background

Vector control interventions including long-lasting insecticide treated nets (LLINs) and indoor residual spraying (IRS) remain among the most effective strategies to prevent malaria transmission [1]. This strategy has significantly contributed to the reduction in malaria cases between 2000 and 2015, with the large-scale deployment of LLINs and IRS averting 68% and 13% of the reduction in malaria respectively [2]. Despite the gains achieved by vector control interventions during this period, multiple factors threaten future progress among which resistance of the vectors to the insecticides, and residual transmission. Since 2010, resistance to at least one class of insecticide has been reported in sixty-one countries which not only shortens the lifespan of the existing vector control tools but also undermines the efficacy of novel developed vector control products through cross/multiple resistance [3]. Therefore, the recent gains in reducing malaria transmission could be lost if resistance to insecticides is not well managed.

In response to the challenge of insecticide resistance in malaria vectors, the Global Plan for Insecticide Resistance Management (GPIRM) came up with strategies to preserve the effectiveness of current vector

control tools and at the same time develop new and innovative vector control, to significantly reduce malaria morbidity and mortalities [4]. Among the novel insecticides proposed for managing pyrethroid resistance, neonicotinoids have been presented as a good alternative because they target nicotinic acetylcholine receptors (nAChR) which represent a new biochemical target in public health insects [5, 6]. This insecticide is proposed to be used in rotation as either a mixture or in a single formulation to delay or reverse the spread of resistance [3, 4, 7]. Fludora® Fusion developed by Bayer (Bayer CropScience, Monheim, Germany) is one of the new mixture formulations combining this novel insecticide (clothianidin) and the pyrethroid (deltamethrin) (8:1 w/w) approved for indoor residual spraying (IRS) as a tool for insecticide resistance management (IRM). Field trials using this new formulation demonstrated its high efficacy against various malaria vectors, including pyrethroid-resistant populations [5, 8, 9]. Detecting and monitoring levels of resistance, and understanding how resistance could arise to such new a product is critical to preserve its efficacy.

Resistance to insecticides such as pyrethroid usually arise through target site mutations affecting the voltage gated sodium channel (VGSC, Knock Down Resistance '*kdr*' mutations) and increased insecticide metabolism mediated by detoxification enzymes (metabolic resistance). *Kdr* mutations for example are widely distributed in African *Anopheles* populations and encompass *kdr West* (L1014F) and *kdr East* (L1014S) mutations [6, 7]. Metabolic resistance occurs through increased activities of detoxification enzymes, resulting in increased insecticide metabolism [10]. The main detoxification enzyme families involved include cytochrome P450 monooxygenases (P450, CYP for genes), carboxyl/cholinesterases (CCE), Glutathione-S-transferase (GST), UDP-glycosyl-transferases (UDPGT) and sulfotransferases (SULT). In addition to target-site modifications and metabolic resistance, additional mechanisms involving cuticle modifications, altered insecticide transport and sequestration, sensory appendage protein (SAP) and chemosensory proteins (CSP) have been reported [11–15]. In contrast to pyrethroids, all neonicotinoids act on the insect central nervous system as agonists of the postsynaptic nicotinic acetylcholine receptors (nAChRs). Molecular basis of resistance to this insecticide remains unknown in major malaria vectors despite recent report of clothianidin resistance in *Anopheles funestus* and *An. gambiae* [16–18]. Also, it remains unknown if P450-based or GSTs-based pyrethroid resistance markers could negatively/positively impact the efficacy of neonicotinoid-based control tools such as Fludora® Fusion or SumiShield® 50WG. This should be a critical step before the implementation of clothianidin-based tool in the field. The aim of this study was to evaluate the efficacy and residual effect of Fludora® Fusion in the field then determine the impact of known resistance markers on the performance of this new IRS product in field population of *An. gambiae* and *An. funestus* from Cameroon.

Study area and mosquitoes strain used

The study was performed in the experimental hut at Elende (3°41'57.27"N, 11°33'28.46"E), a rural village situated in central Cameroon close to Yaoundé (Fig. 1). This village is characterized by a classical Guinean equatorial climate with four distinct seasons: a short rainy season from mid-March to the end of June; a short dry season from late June to mid-August; a long rainy season which runs from mid-August to mid-November and a long dry season which runs from mid-November to mid-March. This locality is

highly endemic to malaria mainly driven by *An. funestus s.s.* (792 infective bites/person/year) [19]. Additionally, *An. gambiae* larvae were collected in Nkolondom (3°57'18" N, 11°29'36" E), then reared at the CRID insectary and release in the experimental hut. Nkolondom (Fig. 1) is also situated in the Centre region and characterised by extensive agricultural all over the year with massive use of pesticide which have contributed to extremely high level pyrethroids resistance [20, 21] and a recent report of neonicotinoids resistance [22].

Susceptibility testing in the lab

CDC bottle tests [23] were used to determine the susceptibility of different mosquito populations or strains to the following insecticides:

- i. Deltamethrin (DLT): 12.5µg/ml/bottle (acetone as solvent)
- ii. Clothianidin (CTD): 90µg/ml/bottle (acetone + mero as solvent)
- iii. Fludora® Fusion (deltamethrin + Clothionidin): 12.5µg/ml/bottle (DLT) + 90µg/ml/bottle (CTD) (acetone + mero as solvent)
- iv. Control (acetone)

Sugar-starved adult female *Anopheles* mosquitoes (20–25), aged 2–5 days, were exposed in the coated bottles (5 replicates for the test + 2 controls for each active ingredient) for 1 hour. After exposure, mosquitoes were transferred to resting cups and fed 10% sugar juice for the entire observation period (72 hours). Knockdown was assessed one hour after exposure and the final mortality assessed at 24, 48 and 72 hours.

Impact of L1014 on the efficacy of Fludora® Fusion

Since the frequency of the L1014F-kdr resistance marker is fixed in the Nkolondom population, the KIS/NKOL hybrid strain resulting from the cross between the Nkolondom wild population and the susceptible lab strain Kisumu were used to determine the effect of this marker on the efficacy of Fludora® Fusion after EHT. The L1014F-kdr marker was genotyped by conventional PCR according to the protocol defined by Martinez-Torres *et al.* [24].

Experimental hut trials

Experimental hut design

The huts are built according to the West African model recommended by the WHO [25]. They are made of a concrete base surrounded by a drainage channel filled with water to trap ants. The walls are made of concrete bricks and plastered inside and out with a mortar made of a mixture of cement and sand. The roof is made of corrugated iron and the ceiling is made of plywood. The 4 windows located on three sides of the hut are designed from metal pieces attached at an angle to create a funnel with a 1 cm gap, which

facilitates the entry of upward flying mosquitoes, but greatly limits their exit once they have entered the hut.

Experimental hut treatments

The following insecticides were tested in 4 experimental huts:

- i. Unsprayed hut (control);
- ii. Deltamethrin sprayed at 25 mg/m²;
- iii. Clothianidin sprayed at 200 mg/m²;
- iv. Fludora® Fusion sprayed at 25 mg/m² + 200 mg/m².

The huts were sprayed using the *IK vector control* constant pressure sprayer. To improve the accuracy and quality of the spraying, the various walls and the ceiling were marked in advance with strips and a guide post was attached to the end of the spray wand to maintain a fixed distance from the wall. At the end of the spraying of each hut, the volume of insecticide sprayed was estimated by subtracting the initial volume minus the post-treatment volume.

Assessment of spraying quality

To ensure that the recommended dose was accurately applied to the substrate, filter papers (Whatman No. 1) measuring 5 × 5 cm were taped to each wall of the hut. After spraying, the filter papers were removed, carefully wrapped in aluminium foil and stored at 4 °C for approximately 2 weeks, after which they were sent to BioGenius GmbH, Germany, for chemical analysis to assess the quality of the spray applications using gas chromatography.

Hut trial procedure

The test was conducted according to the protocol described in the WHO guidelines for testing mosquito adulticide for indoor residual spraying and treatment of mosquito nets [26]. Four consenting adult male volunteers slept in the different huts between 20:00 and 06:00 to attract female mosquitoes looking for a blood meal. Sleepers were rotated daily to reduce bias due to individual attractiveness. Each morning, starting at 05:00, mosquitoes were collected in the hut and on the veranda trap using haemolysis tubes. Mosquitoes collected in each compartment were kept in different labelled bags to avoid mixing of samples; they were then transported to the insectary where morphological identification was done and samples stored as live, dead, blood-fed and unfed. Alive mosquitoes were fed with a 10% glucose solution. Mortality was recorded every 24h for 3 days, after which alive specimens were kept in RNA-later and dead ones in silicagel for further molecular analyses.

Regarding the release-recapture approach, the same methodology described above was applied. The F2 generation were used for the release experiments in the huts after the initial crossing between the laboratory susceptible females (Kisumu) and field resistant males (Nkolondom). Before the releasing, all the openings of the hut were closed, and each test night, 25-30 female mosquitoes aged 5-8 days were released at 8:00 pm and recaptured individually from 5:00 am by the sleepers using haemolysis tubes and stored in bags labelled according to the collection place (veranda or room).

Outcome measures

The main outcomes measured were:

- i. **Deterrence effect:** reduction in entry into the treated huts relative to the control hut (untreated hut);
- ii. **Induced exophily:** proportion of mosquitoes found in exit traps;
- iii. **Blood feeding:** proportion of blood-fed mosquitoes;
- iv. **Immediate mortality:** proportion of dead mosquitoes at the end of the exposure time;
- v. **Delayed mortality:** proportion of dead mosquitoes after 24, 48, and 72 hours.

Residual efficacy of the IRS products

To assess the residual efficacy of the products on the treated walls, WHO cone bioassays were conducted each month using 2–5-day-old, female mosquitoes of the insecticide susceptible *An. gambiae* Kisumu strain and the resistant field strain *An. gambiae* from Nkolondom. Bioassays were performed a week after application of treatments and at a monthly interval thereafter over 03 months. A minimum of 50 mosquitoes of each strain were tested per hut in cohorts of 10 per cone on each treated wall/ceiling surface. Mosquitoes were exposed to treated surfaces for 30 min following WHO guidelines [12]. Mortality was recorded every 24 h up to day 3 post-exposure.

Impact of the L119F-GSTe2 mutation on the effectiveness of different treatments

Samples from the experimental hut trials were grouped into different categories: collection place (veranda, room) and physiological status (alive or dead and blood-fed or unfed). DNA was extracted from each group of sample using the Livak protocol [27]. The L119F-GSTe2 resistance markers was genotyped using the allele-specific PCR on *An. funestus* samples EHT [28] in order to establish its impact on the performance of different treatments.

Results

Susceptibility profile of *An. funestus* and *An. gambiae* after CDC bottle assays

All the populations tested were fully susceptible to clothianidin and Fludora® Fusion (deltamethrin + clothianidin), while the field strains showed resistance to deltamethrin with a mortality rate of 36% for the *An. gambiae* strain from Nkolondom and 78% for the *An. funestus* from Elende (Fig. 2).

Chemical contains of the insecticides in the walls after spraying

Assessing the quality of the spray applications using gas chromatography on the filter papers sent to BioGenius GmbH, Germany, for chemical analysis revealed that insecticide concentrations for various treatments was good although some of the deltamethrin walls was slightly overdosed (**Table S1**).

Performance of Fludora® Fusion on free flying *Anopheles funestus* from Elende in EHT

A total of 1447 female *Anopheles funestus* mosquitoes were collected during the two months of the evaluation (M1&M6), 630 for the first month and 817 for the sixth month. Several parameters were taken into account for the evaluation of this performance.

Deterrence effect/entry rate

A significantly higher ($P < 0.0001$) entry rate was observed in the untreated/control hut compared to the treated huts during the first month of evaluation. The deterrence effect was higher in huts treated with deltamethrin (80.98%) than in huts treated with clothianidin (70.02%; $P = 0.1$) and Fludora® Fusion (67.4%; $P = 0.05$) although not significant. The hut treated with deltamethrin showed a significantly higher entry rate (45.3%; $P < 0.0001$) compared to other treatments during the sixth month of evaluation indicating a reduced efficacy of deltamethrin six months post treatment.

Exophily Rate

A significantly greater induced exophily was observed in the Fludora® Fusion hut ($P < 0.01$) in month 1 and in deltamethrin hut in month 6 ($P < 0.01$) compared to the other treatments. The difference in induced exophily observed between deltamethrin and Fludora® Fusion in month 1 of the evaluation may be related to the low number of mosquitoes collected in the hut treated with deltamethrin.

Blood-feeding rate

Due to the absence of a physical barrier with IRS, the blood feeding rate was very high in all treatments (> 72%). However, a significantly higher blood feeding rate was observed with clothianidin and Fludora® Fusion in the first month of the evaluation compared to deltamethrin ($P < 0.05$).

Mortality rate

Mortality rates varied between 11 and 14% in the control hut. This was significantly lower compared to the mortality rates recorded with deltamethrin (42.4%; $P < 0.01$), clothianidin (64.4%; $P < 0.001$) and Fludora® Fusion (62.8%; $P < 0.001$). Mortality recorded in the clothianidin-treated hut was not different to

that of Fludora® Fusion treatment (64.42% vs 62.83%; $P > 0.05$). Also, there was no significant reduction in mortality when comparing the efficacy at months one (M1) and six (M6) for all the treatments (Fig. 3).

Release-recapture of wild *Anopheles gambiae* from Nkolondom

The results of the performance of IRS products in experimental huts against field pyrethroid-resistant population of *Anopheles gambiae* from Nkolondom are summarised in Table 1. The exophily rate was very high in all treatments including the control. A significantly high induced exophily was observed in the deltamethrin (51.8%; $P < 0.0001$) and Fludora® Fusion (40.7%; $P < 0.0007$) treatments compared to clothianidin (19.3%; $P < 0.0002$). The blood feeding rate was low in all treatments ($< 10\%$) and no significant variation ($P > 0.05$) was observed between the different treatments. In terms of mortality, clothianidin (45.6%; $P < 0.0001$) and Fludora® Fusion (50%; $P < 0.0001$) induced a significantly higher mortality rate than deltamethrin (26.7%) (Table 1).

Table 1

Results of the performance of IRS products in experimental huts against pyrethroid-resistant wild *Anopheles gambiae* mosquitoes (values followed by the same letter along the same line are not significantly different at $P = 0.05$)

	Control	Deltamethrin (25 mg/m ²)	Clothianidin (200 mg/m ²)	Fludora® Fusion (225 mg/m ²)
Females caught	471	446	450	440
%Exophily (95% CI)	29.9 (25.8–34.1)b	51.8 (47.2–56.4)d	19.3 (15.7–23.0)a	40.7 (36.1–45.3)c
%Blood fed (95% CI)	7.6 (5.2–10.0)a	5.4 (3.3–7.5)a	7.8 (5.3–10.3)a	8.4 (5.8–11.0)a
% Immediate mortality (95% CI)	2.3 (1.0–3.7)a	6.1 (3.8–8.3)b	10.4 (7.6–13.3)c	14.3 (11.1–17.6)c
%Mortality (72 h) (95% CI)	14.0 (10.9–17.2)a	26.7 (22.6–30.8)b	45.6 (41.0–50.2)c	50 (45.3–54.7)c

Release-recapture of the hybrid Kisumu-Nkolondom *Anopheles gambiae*

The results of the efficacy of different treatments evaluated are summarised in Table 2. Induced exophily was significantly higher in the hut treated with Fludora® Fusion compared to other treatments (Table 2). In comparison to the control, huts treated with deltamethrin and clothianidin had significantly lower blood feeding rates. All treatments induced significantly higher mortality compared to control ($P < 0.0001$).

However, clothianidin and Fludora® Fusion induced comparable mortality rates ($P > 0.05$), whereas deltamethrin induced significantly lower mortality compared to the latter two ($P < 0.01$).

Table 2

IRS performance against hybrid *An. gambiae* KIS/NKOL (values followed by the same letter along the same line are not significantly different at $P = 0.05$)

	Control	Deltamethrin (25 mg/m ²)	Clothianidin (200 mg/m ²)	Fludora® Fusion (225 mg/m ²)
Females caught	221	362	386	411
%Exophily (95% CI)	32.6 (26.4–38.8) ^b	27.5 (22.8–31.9) ^{a,b}	24.9 (20.6–29.2) ^a	51.1 (46.3–55.9) ^c
%Blood fed (95% CI)	29.0 (23.0–34.9) ^b	9.9 (6.9–13.0) ^a	12.2 (8.9–15.4) ^a	26.8 (22.5–31.0) ^b
% Immediate mortality (95% CI)	11.8 (7.5–16.0) ^a	30.7 (25.9–35.4) ^c	22.5 (18.4–26.7) ^b	17.8 (14.1–21.5) ^b
%Mortality (95% CI)	22.6 (17.1–28.1) ^a	54.4 (49.3–59.6) ^b	83.7 (80.0–87.4) ^d	69.3 (64.9–73.8) ^c

Residual efficacy of the IRS products

Mortality rates obtained after the 30-minute cone test on walls with the susceptible laboratory strain KISUMU were, above 80% throughout the evaluation period (12 months), confirming the bioavailability of the active ingredients on treated surfaces (Fig. 4). For the first six months of evaluation, clothianidin and Fludora® Fusion huts induced mortality rates $\geq 80\%$ against the pyrethroid resistant *An. gambiae* strain from Nkolondom except for the third month of evaluation where slight reduction was observed (70% and 62% respectively for clothianidin and Fludora® Fusion). However, mortality rates with deltamethrin did not achieve the 40% level in any case (Fig. 4). The mortality rate significantly reduced from M6 to M12 for all the treatment including Fludora® Fusion and clothianidin indicating a high level of resistance in this field population compared to Kisumu. Additional in-situ cone assay on the wall with *An. funestus* from Elende revealed mortality rates higher than 80% for clothianidin (93.4%) and Fludora® Fusion (86.3%) and 41.67% for deltamethrin after 72h of exposure (Fig. 4).

Impact of L119F-GSTe2 on the efficacy of Fludora® Fusion

Mortality

Genotyping of alive and dead mosquitoes after exposure to deltamethrin showed that homozygote resistant have more chance to survive than homozygote susceptible SS (OR = 2.0; P = 0.04) and RS (OR = 1.8; P = 0.3). However, no association was observed for clothianidin and Fludora Fusion either at the allelic or genotypic level (Fig. 5; Table 3). Due to the low number of unfed mosquitoes ($n < 30$) and the low number of mosquitoes collected in the veranda trap of the huts of the different treatments, assessment of the impact of the L119F-GSTe2 mutation on the ability to take a blood feeding or to induce exophily was not possible (Fig. 5).

Table 3

Impact of L119F-GSTe2 mutation on the efficacy of IRS products in experimental huts against free flying *Anopheles funestus*. OR = odd ratio, Pv = P-value and CI = confidence interval

Mortality									
	Deltamethrin			Clothianidin			Fludora® Fusion		
Genotypes	OR	95% CI	P v	OR	95% CI	P v	OR	95% CI	P v
RR vs RS	1.8	0.5–6.6	0,3	1.4	0.7– 2.6	0.1	0.6	0.3–1.2	0.1
RR vs SS	2.0	0.9–4.2	0.04	3.6	1.4–9.4	0.006	1.07	0.3–3.3	0.6
RS vs SS	0.8	0.3–2.8	0.5	1.4	0.7–2.6	0.2	1.6	0.6 – 4.8	0.1
R vs S	1.3	0.6–3.3	0.6	1.1	0.6–2	0.87	0.9	0.5–2	0.88

Impact of the L1014F-Kdr mutation on the efficacy of Fludora® Fusion

Mortality

Although the homozygote resistant mosquitoes were mainly found among the alive mosquitoes compared to the dead, there was no significant correlation between the presence of the L1014F-Kdr mutation and the ability of mosquitoes to survive exposure to deltamethrin ($\chi^2 = 1$; $P = 0.6$) and clothianidin ($\chi^2 = 2$; $P = 0.4$). However, whatever the treatment considered, the proportion of RR was higher in the survivors compared to the dead (Fig. 6). In contrast to clothianidin and deltamethrin, with the homozygous resistant genotype (RR) showed a greater ability to survive exposure to Fludora® Fusion compared to heterozygous (RS) ($OR = 4.4$; $P < 0.05$) but no association was observed between RR and SS.

Blood feeding

No significant association was found between the presence of the L1014F mutation and the ability of mosquitoes to take a blood meal in huts treated with clothianidin ($\chi^2 = 4.1$; $P = 0.1$) and Fludora® Fusion ($\chi^2 = 1.7$; $P = 0.4$) (Table 4). It was nevertheless observed that the homozygous resistant genotype had a higher relative frequency in the groups of specimens that had taken a blood meal compared to those that did not (Fig. 6). In contrast to the two previous treatments, a significant association was observed

between the L1014F-Kdr resistance allele and an increased ability to take a blood meal in the hut treated with deltamethrin (R vs S; $OR = 1.8$; $P = 0.04$). Comparison of genotypic frequencies showed that RR (RR vs SS; $OR = 6$, $P = 0.02$) and RS (RS vs SS; $OR = 4$, $P = 0.06$) genotypes were more likely to take a blood meal than SS.

Exophily

As observed with the previous parameters, no significant correlation was established between the presence of the L1014F-kdrw mutation and the induced exophily, whatever the treatment (Table 4). However, it was observed that, contrary to clothianidin, the proportion of specimens of RR genotypes collected in the veranda trap was higher than that collected in the room of deltamethrin and Fludora® Fusion treatments (Fig. 6).

Table 4
Impact of L1014F Kdr_w mutation on the efficacy of IRS products in experimental huts against the hybrid strain Nkolondom/KISUMU (*Anopheles gambiae*).

Mortality									
	Deltamethrin			Clothianidin			Fludora® Fusion		
Genotypes	OR	95% CI	P v	OR	95% CI	P v	OR	95% CI	P v
RR vs RS	1.7	0.6–4.8	0.4	1.8	0.6–4.8	0.3	4.4	1.1–18.1	0.04
RR vs SS	1.2	0.3–4.7	1	0.8	0.2–3.7	1	6	1–35.9	0.1
RS vs SS	0.7	0.2–2.4	0.8	0.5	0.1–1.8	0.3	1.4	0.3–5.6	0.7
R vs S	1.2	0.6–2.2	0.6	1	0.6–1.9	1	2	1–3.9	0.1
Blood feeding									
RR vs RS	1.5	0.6–3.6	0.4	2.4	0.9–5.8	0.1	1.7	0.7–4.4	0.2
RR vs SS	6	1.2–30.5	0.02	3	0.8–11.8	0.1	1.8	0.5–6.5	0.3
RS vs SS	4	0.9–19	0.1	1.3	0.4–4.4	0.8	1	0.3–3.1	1
R vs S	1.8	1–3.3	0.04	1.5	0.9–2.7	0.1	1.3	0.8–2.2	0.4
Exophily									
RR vs RS	1.4	0.6–3.4	0.5	0.4	0.1–1.1	0.1	2	0.8–5	0.1
RR vs SS	0.9	0.3–2.8	0.8	0.4	0.1–1.8	0.3	2.3	0.7–8	0.2
RS vs SS	0.6	0.2–1.8	0.4	1.1	0.4–3.6	0.8	1.1	0.4–3.3	0.8
R vs S	1	0.6–1.7	1	0.7	0.4–1.3	0.3	1.4	0.8–2.3	0.2
OR = odd ratio, Pv = P-value and CI = confidence interval									

Discussion

Aggravation of pyrethroid resistance in the major malaria vectors presents a serious threat to vector control interventions in Africa and has led to the introduction of new insecticides, such as neonicotinoids. To prolong the effectiveness of these new products, it is vital to keep vigil on potential cross-resistance conferred by metabolic resistance to pyrethroids. The present study evaluated the ability of neonicotinoid-based IRS formulation Fludora® Fusion to control pyrethroid-resistant malaria vectors in laboratory and experimental hut in Cameroon and assessed the impact of known molecular markers on its efficacy.

Combination of deltamethrin with clothianidin induced significant higher mortality in CDC compared to deltamethrin alone

Full susceptibility of all populations/strains tested to the deltamethrin/clothianidin mixture was observed using CDC bottle bioassays, while wild populations of Nkolondom (*An. gambiae*) and Elende (*An. funestus*) were resistant to deltamethrin. This susceptibility to the clothianidin/deltamethrin mixture is mainly due to clothianidin which targets nicotinic acetylcholine receptors and previous studies reported that malaria vectors across the continent are broadly susceptible to the insecticide when using the appropriate solvent (acetone + MERO) [16, 17]. Nevertheless, it was also reported that MERO could mask resistance to clothianidin as reduced susceptibility was observed in some location where absolute ethanol or acetone alone was used as solvents [16, 22]. Resistance to deltamethrin obtained here are confirmed by previous work carried out in the same sites showing extreme level of pyrethroid resistance but susceptibility to clothianidin [20, 29]. This indicates the need to introduce new intervention tools using new non-pyrethroid active molecules, such as clothianidin, to combat vectors on the continent.

Fludora® Fusion showed very high performance on *An. funestus* and *An. gambiae* in the EHT compared to deltamethrin

Fludora® Fusion induced the higher mortality in all the populations tested compared to deltamethrin. As stated above, the higher efficacy of Fludora Fusion is associated to the clothianidin component as previously reported in other countries [8, 9, 30, 31]. The low mortality response recorded with deltamethrin IRS in the experimental huts is similar to the recent observations in Benin [5, 32] pointing to the urgent need of alternative control tools for IRS interventions. Our study demonstrates for the first time the efficacy of Fludora® Fusion against wild free-flying pyrethroid-resistant malaria vectors in semi-field condition in Cameroon. Similar efficacy of this new IRS formulation was previously reported in other African countries [8, 9, 30, 31, 33] confirming the suitability of Fludora® Fusion for indoor residual spraying in Cameroon and other malaria-endemic areas where resistance has escalated to pyrethroid. However a lower mortality rate was observed with the *An. gambiae* population from Nkolondom where neonicotinoid resistance has been previously reported [22] compared to the *An. funestus* population (61.79% vs 50%) from Elende. The reduced efficacy of Fludora® Fusion against the *Anopheles gambiae* population from Nkolondom could be associated to the emergence of resistance due to pre-exposure to residues of neonicotinoid insecticides in breeding sites in this agricultural setting [34]. Farmers in Nkolondom use several neonicotinoid-based pesticides such as Benji® (active ingredient = acetamiprid),

Optimal (active ingredient = clothianidin), to protect crops from pests. This pesticide usage could easily pollute larval habitats and induce the expression of protective mechanisms in vectors as previously reported that pre-exposure in the field to imidacloprid and acetamiprid induces cross-resistance to clothianidin and reduces the efficacy of the clothianidin-based tools SumiShield® 50WG [34]. All this shows that Fludora® Fusion could rapidly lose the efficacy in areas of intense agricultural practices if not well managed. In all experiments, Clothianidin alone induced higher mortality than Fludora Fusion. Using hybrid strain from the crossing between the resistant field population (from Nkolondom) and the susceptible laboratory strain (Kisumu), clothianidin sprayed alone induced significantly higher mortality than Fludora® Fusion. This difference in mortality observed could, on the one hand, be linked to the high exophily induced by Fludora® Fusion due to the irritant effect of its deltamethrin component, which prevents mosquitoes from resting long enough on the walls of treated huts to absorb the lethal dose of active ingredients and, secondly, to the difference in the physiological protection mechanism brought into play by the specimens after exposure to clothianidin alone and to the clothianidin plus deltamethrin mixture, as previously reported by Zoh et al [18]. Similarly, previous studies in experimental huts have also shown a significant reduction in mortality with the chlorfenapyr + alpha-cypermethrin IRS mixture compared with chlorfenapyr alone, due to the irritant effect of the alpha-cypermethrin contained in the mixture [35].

Fludora® Fusion did not showed high blood feeding inhibition

The blood-feeding rates obtained during the evaluation in the experimental hut with free-flying *Anopheles funestus* were very high in all treatments (generally over 80%). Unlike LLINs, IRS is not a physical barrier that limits blood feeding, but a chemical trap that targets blood-feeding vectors that rest on sprayed surfaces and absorb a lethal dose of insecticide. Similar blood feeding patterns have been obtained in several other countries and even with different classes of insecticide [5, 8, 35, 36]. As previously obtained in Benin [8] Fludora® Fusion did not induce any inhibition of blood feeding in this study compared with the control irrespective of the population or strain tested. This indicate that additional intervention such as bed nets or house improvement should be combined with Fludora Fusion to guarantee a high personal protection rate to the populations as mosquitoes could continue transmitting the disease before been killed by the insecticide

Fludora® Fusion compare to clothianidin induced more exophily in both *An. funestus* and *An. gambiae*

For all the populations tested, mosquito exiting rates were higher in the huts treated with deltamethrin and Fludora® Fusion than in those treated with clothianidin alone and control. This excito-repellent effect observed with Fludora® Fusion is undeniably associated with the deltamethrin contained in the mixture as previously reported in Benin [8]. This effect of pyrethroids had been also reported in the past evaluation of the efficacy of mosquito nets in experimental huts in Cameroon [37]. This study showed a variation in the excito-repellent effect linked not only to the class of insecticide sprayed but also to the species tested; this excito-repellent effect was significantly higher with *Anopheles gambiae* populations compared to *An. funestus*. The exophily induced by Fludora® Fusion was significantly higher ($P < 0.05$)

with *Anopheles gambiae* (41%) compared to *An. funestus* (26%) which could be associated to the fact that *Anopheles gambiae* has a greater tendency to exophily/exophagous behaviour than *Anopheles funestus* as reported by entomological studies [19]. This exophilic tendency reduces the contact time of the vectors with the sprayed surfaces and consequently the amount of active ingredient absorbed. This would explain the lower mortality observed in *An. gambiae* compared to *An. funestus*. Overall, the higher insecticide induced exiting rate observed with Fludora® Fusion compared to clothianidin alone in this study and others [8, 30, 31] is important for reducing indoor resting and biting which may contribute to lowering transmission intensities.

Fludora® Fusion displayed a higher residual effect on both *An. funestus* and *An. gambiae* compared to deltamethrin

The results of the WHO cone bioassays on the treated surfaces of the experimental huts amply demonstrate the ability of Fludora® Fusion to induce high levels of mortality (> 80%) in pyrethroid-resistant mosquitoes; with efficacy prolonged for up to 6 and 12 months against wild populations of *An. gambiae* and *An. funestus* respectively after spraying. Deltamethrin applied alone showed low residual activity against pyrethroid-resistant wild populations, with mortality rates below 50% throughout the evaluation period. In view of the above, Fludora® Fusion could be a good candidate for IRS in Cameroon, as its residual activity covers the period of high malaria transmission in all parts of the country. This prolonged residual activity could be explained by the low volatility of clothianidin supported by its very low vapour pressure (9.8×10^{-10} mmHg at 25°C), which significantly reduces the risk of loss of the active ingredient by evaporation into the atmosphere and ensures its availability on sprayed surfaces for a long period of time. [38]. Similar residual efficacy has been reported in several countries where malaria is endemic and vectors are resistant to pyrethroids [5, 8, 9, 30, 31].

The L1014F-kdr pyrethroid resistance marker was associated with resistance to Fludora® Fusion in the EHT whereas the L119F-GSTe2 mutation had no impact

A positive association was found between the modification of the target site (L1014F-Kdr) in *Anopheles gambiae* and the ability to survive exposure to Fludora® Fusion with mosquitoes harbouring the L1014F mutation more able to survive in the presence of Fludora® Fusion compared to their susceptible counterparts. This could be due to deltamethrin component in this IRS product as reported that the L1014F mutation is strongly associated with deltamethrin resistance across the continent [24, 39]. However, no association was observed between this marker and deltamethrin resistance in this study showing that the impact could be different in an IRS product compared to standard WHO tube or CDC bottle assays. Similarly, a negative association was obtained by Tchouakui *et al.* between the L1014F mutation and the ability to survive exposure to clothianidin in a CDC bottle test [16] whereas no association was observed in this study after EHT. Furthermore, no association was found between the DDT/pyrethroid resistance marker L119F-GSTe2 and the ability of *Anopheles funestus* to survive exposure to Fludora® Fusion whereas recent studies show a strong association between L119F-GSTe2 and the ability to survive exposure to clothianidin with CDC bottle test [17]. The difference could be due to

the method used as experimental hut trial takes into consideration the behaviour of the mosquitoes, which is not the case for tests in bottles, which is a direct mortality exposure test. All this shows that there is less chance of cross-resistance between *GSTe2* and clothianidin based-IRS whereas *kdr* mutation could comprise the efficacy of these tools.

Conclusion

This study shows that Fludora® Fusion, is effective in controlling pyrethroid-resistant malaria vectors in Cameroon, as previously shown in many other African countries. However, reduced efficacy of this dual AI IRS product was noticed on *kdr*-resistant *An. gambiae* compared to *An. funestus* which were more susceptible. Interestingly, Fludora® Fusion had prolonged residual activity ranging from 6 months against *An. gambiae* to 12 months against *An. funestus* showing that this could be therefore an appropriate tool for vector control in several malaria endemic regions.

Declarations

Ethics Approval and consent to participate

This work was reviewed and approved by the National Ethics Committee for Health Research (CNERSH) of Cameroon (ID: 2021/07/1372/CE/CNERSH/SP). Written, informed and signed consent was obtained from sleepers before starting the survey. The consent form provided all the information and the evaluation process about the study. Information was translated in local language when needed. All methods were carried out in accordance with relevant guidelines and regulations outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki.

Consent for publication

Not applicable.

Availability of data and materials

The datasets generated and/or analysed during the current study are presented in the manuscript and in supplemental files

Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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Author Contributions

Conceptualization: Magellan Tchouakui and Charles S. Wondji.

Data curation: Riccardo F. Thiomela, Magellan Tchouakui, and Charles S. Wondji.

Formal analysis: Riccardo F. Thiomela and Magellan Tchouakui.

Funding acquisition: Magellan Tchouakui, and Charles S. Wondji.

Investigation: Riccardo F. Thiomela, Magellan Tchouakui, Elysee Nchoutpouen, Benjamin D. Menze.

Methodology: Magellan Tchouakui, Benjamin Menze, Charles S. Wondji.

Validation: Oliver Wood, Sebastian Horstmann and Charles S. Wondji.

Writing – original draft: Riccardo F. Thiomela.

Writing – review & editing: Riccardo F. Thiomela, Magellan Tchouakui, Benjamin D. Menze, Elysee Nchoutpouen, Emilie S. Ngongang-Yipmo, Raymond J. Mahob, Abraham Fomena, Oliver Wood, Sebastian Horstmann and Charles S. Wondji.

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Figures

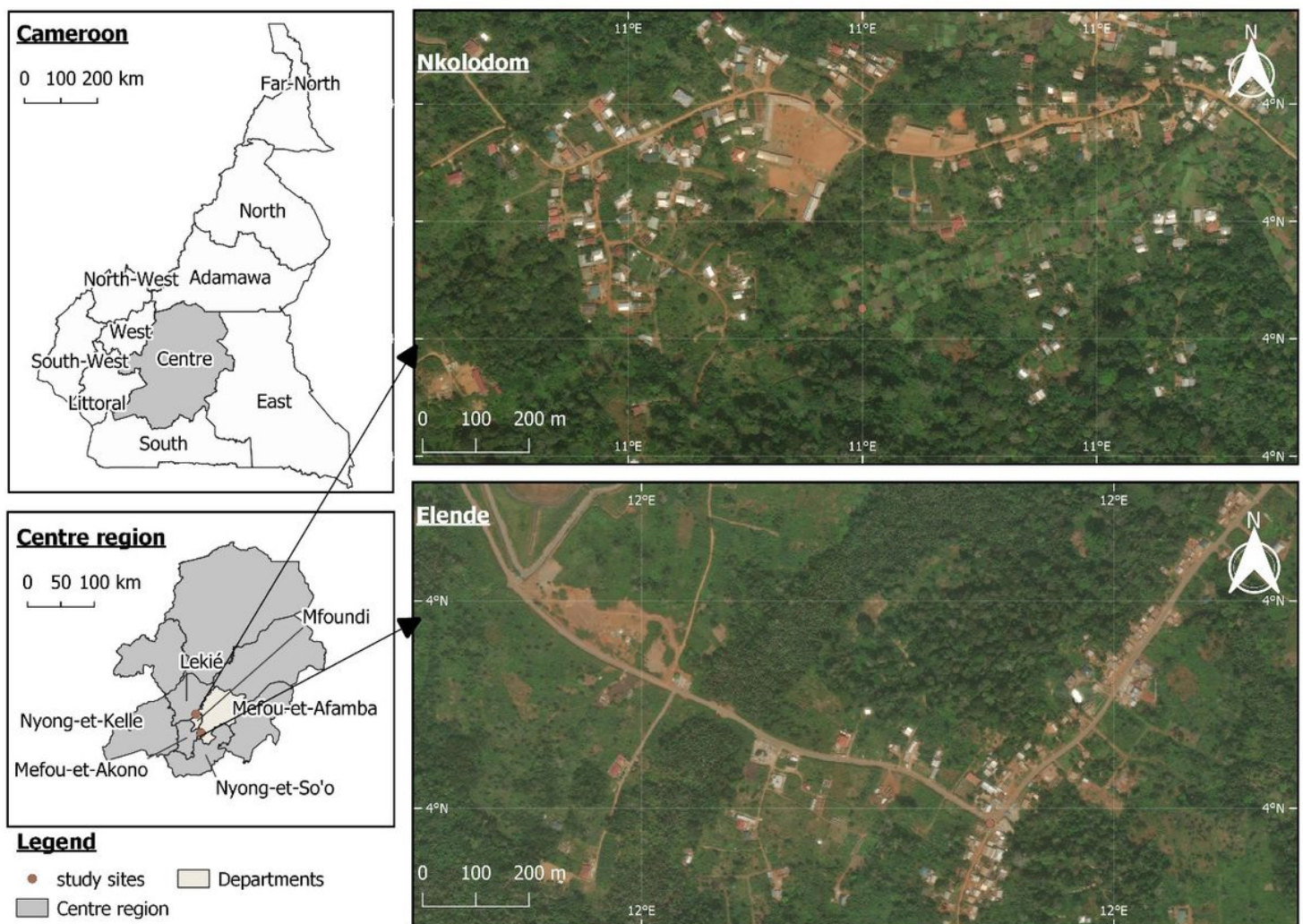


Figure 1

Study and collection site for wild mosquito populations. A) Nkolondom for *Anopheles gambiae* s.s. and B) Elende for *An. funestus* s.s.

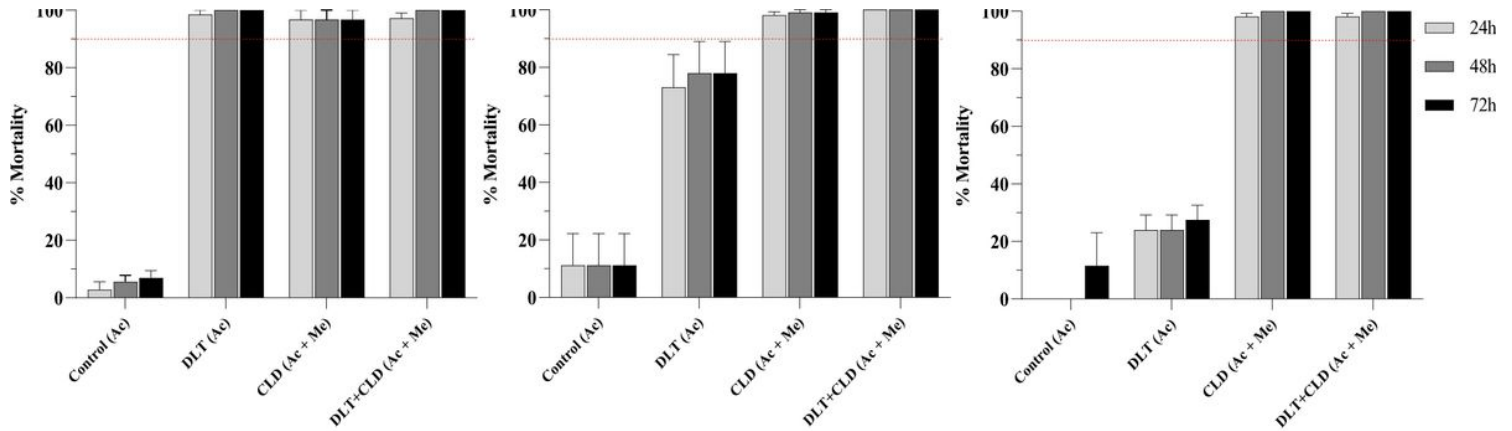


Figure 2

Susceptibility profile of *An. funestus* and *An. gambiae* after CDC bottle assays. Mortality rate of A) Kisumu susceptible lab strain, B) *Anopheles funestus* from Elende and C) *An. gambiae* from Nkolondom 24h post exposure to various insecticides; DLT = deltamethrin, CLD = clothianidin, Ac = acetone and Me = Mero.

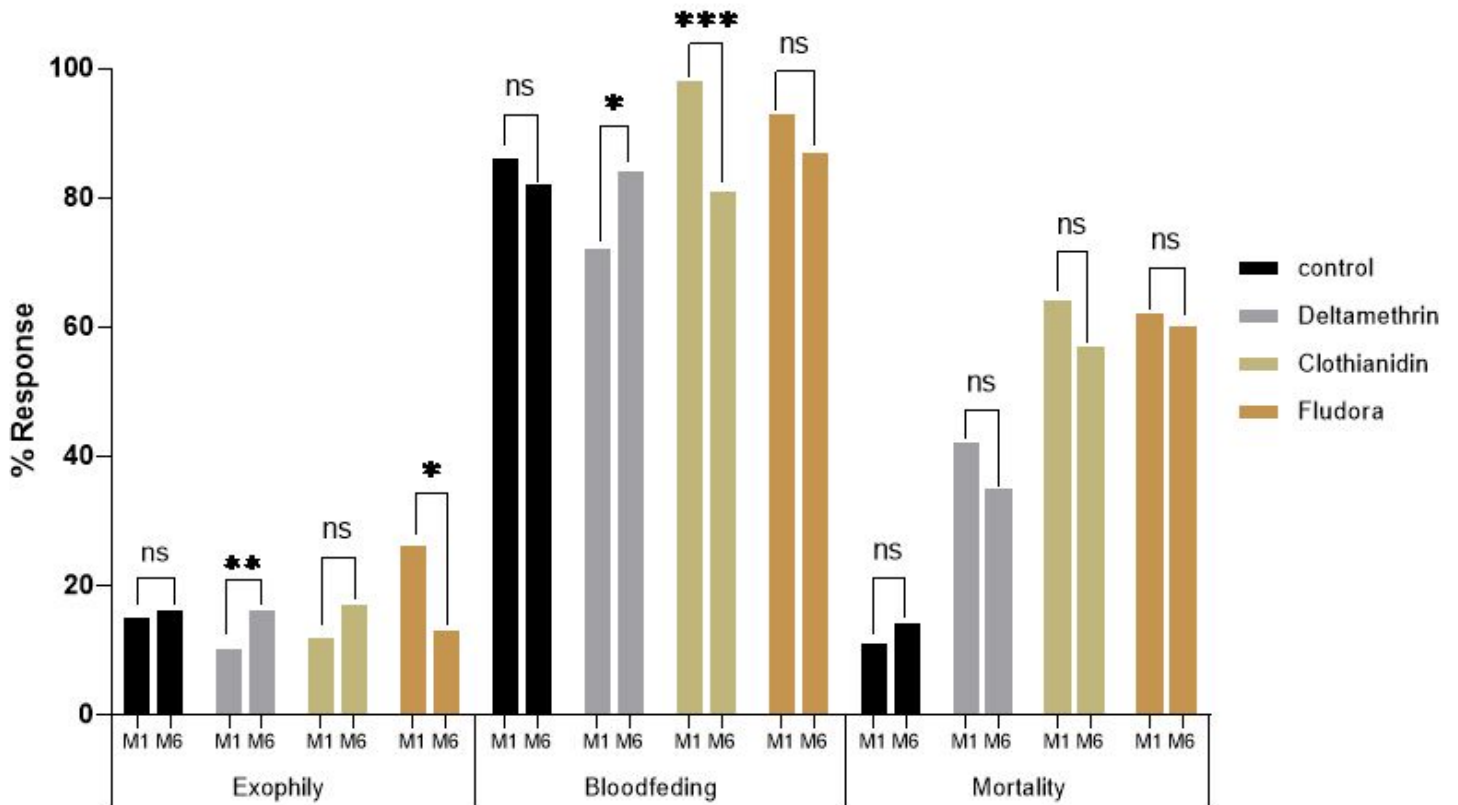


Figure 3

Comparison of IRS product performance between months 1 (M1) and 6 (M6) of the evaluation (ns=no difference, * = $p < 0.05$ ** = $p < 0.01$ *** = $p < 0.001$)

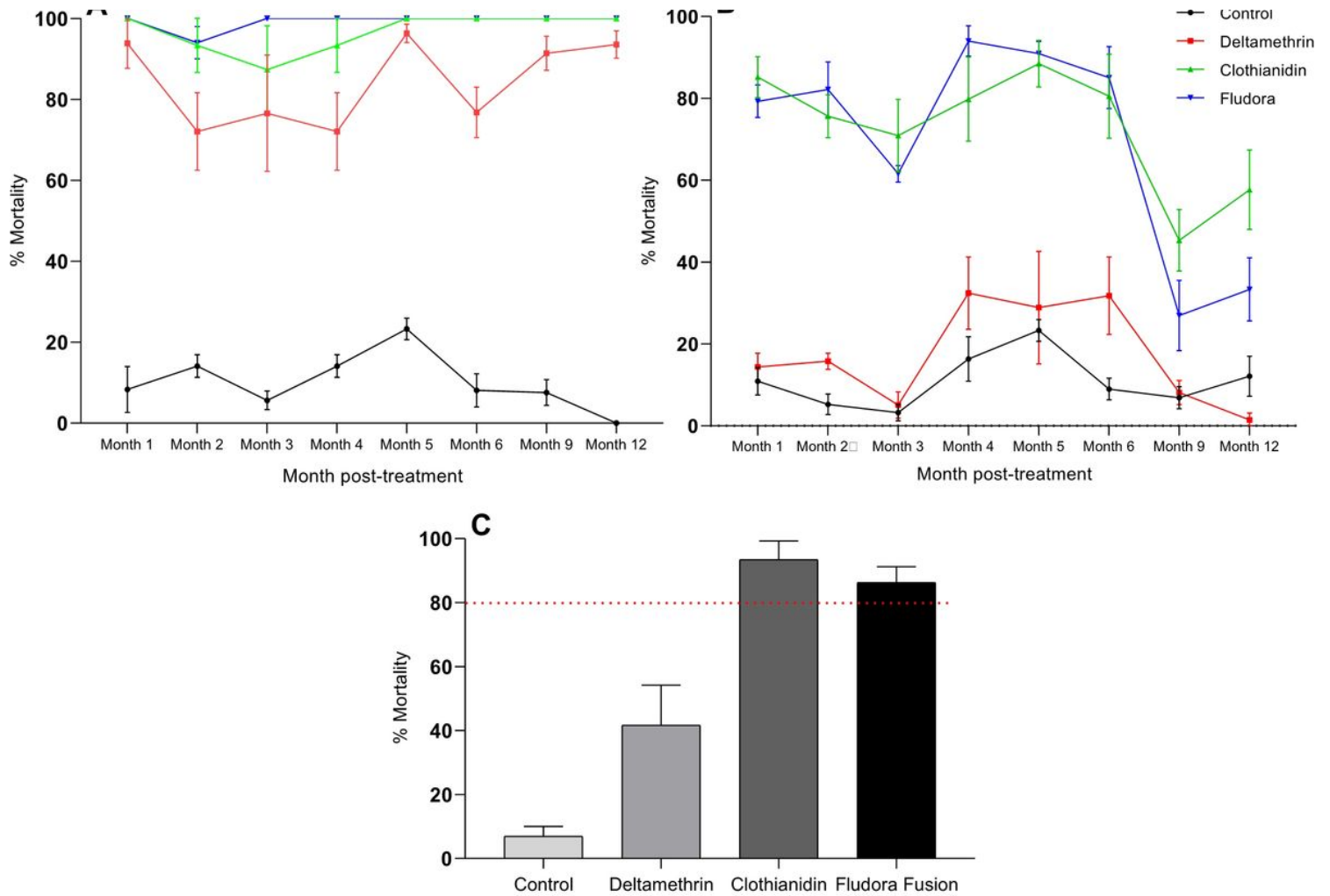


Figure 4

Residual efficacy of the IRS products against the susceptible lab strain Kisumu (A) and wild pyrethroid-resistant populations of *Anopheles gambiae* from Nkolondom (B) and (C) *An. funestus* from Elende.

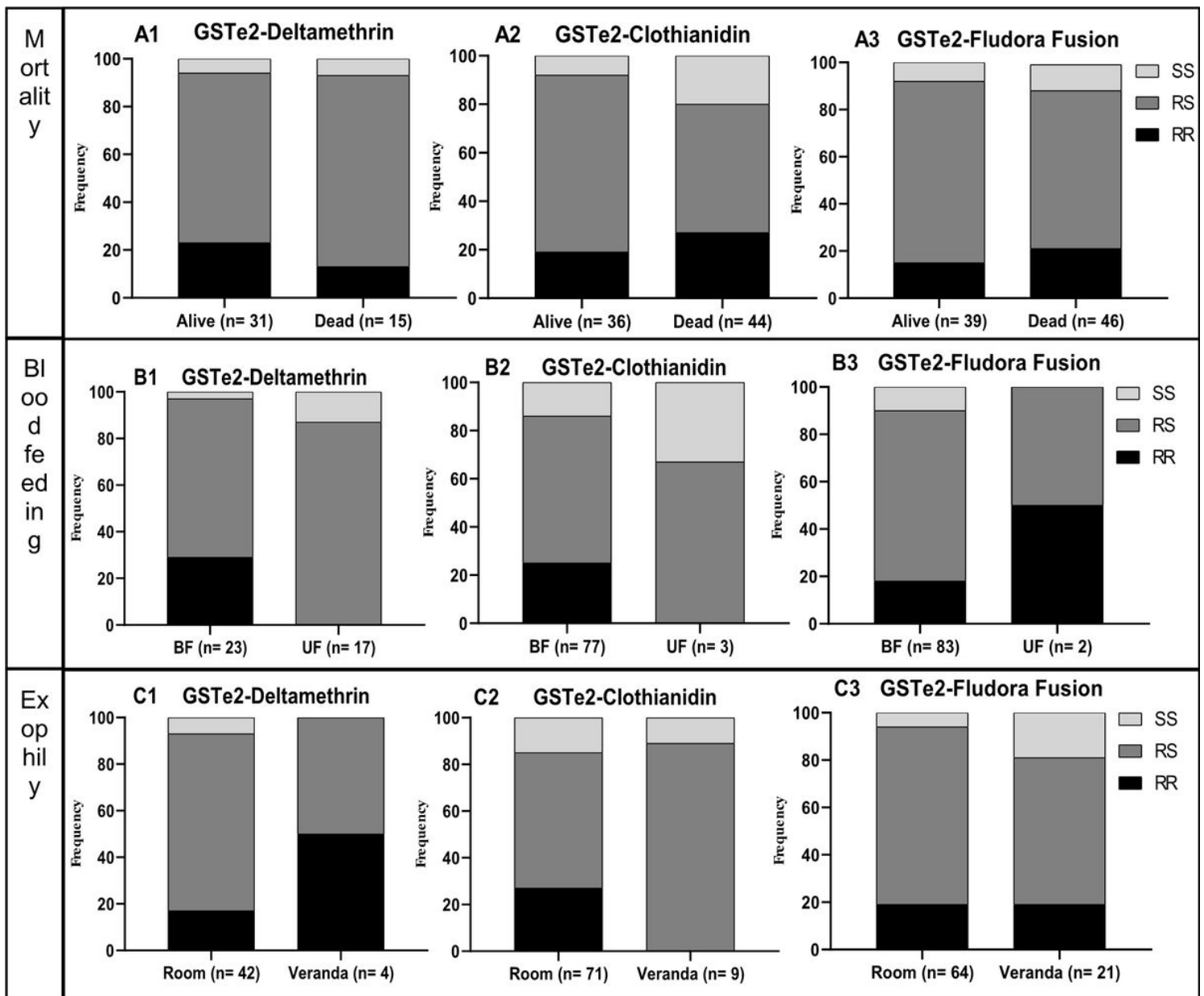


Figure 5

Impact of L119F-GSTe2 mutation on the performance of IRS products in experimental huts against free flying *Anopheles funestus*: Genotype distribution between alive and dead after exposure to deltamethrin (A1), clothianidin (A2) and Fludora® Fusion (A3); genotype distribution between blood fed and unfed after exposure to deltamethrin (B1), clothianidin (B2) and Fludora® Fusion (B3); genotype distribution between indoor (Room) and outdoor (veranda) after exposure to deltamethrin (C1), clothianidin (C2) and Fludora® Fusion (C3). RR= homozygote resistant (119F/F), RS= heterozygote (119L/F) and SS= homozygote susceptible (119L/L).

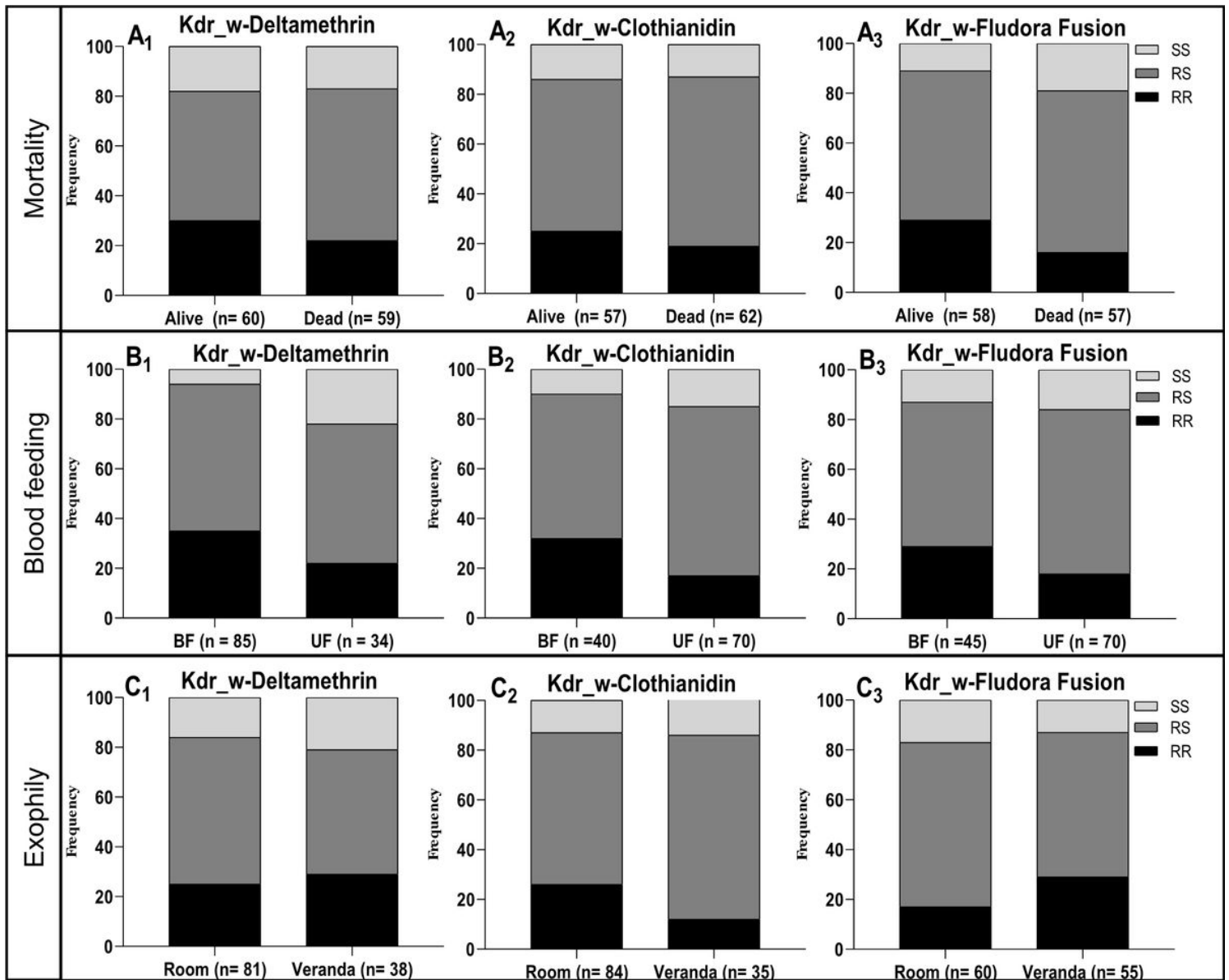


Figure 6

Impact of L1014F-kdr mutation on the performance of IRS products in experimental huts against the hybrid strain Nkolondom/KISUMU (*Anopheles gambiae*): Genotype distribution between alive and dead after exposure to deltamethrin (A1), Clothianidin (A2) and Fludora® Fusion (A3) ; Genotype distribution between blood fed and unfed after exposure to deltamethrin (B1), Clothianidin (B2) and Fludora® Fusion (B3); Genotype distribution between indoor (Room) and outdoor (veranda) after exposure to (C1) deltamethrin, (C2) Clothianidin and (C3) Fludora® Fusion.

Supplementary Files

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- [TableS1Qualitycontrolofthesprayingofexperimentalhuts.xlsx](#)